

CLAIMS

Having thus described our invention, what we claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is as follows:

1. A method of preventing counterfeiting of a smart card, comprising:

5 providing a smart card with a cryptographic structure for authorizing the smart card
which cannot be accessed completely by a predetermined small number of readings,
 wherein said cryptographic structure can be built only by whoever emits the card or an
agent thereof.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

10 providing a reader for reading said smart card and including a database holding
information related to unauthorized smart cards, said reader being on-line, such that said reader is
operatively connected to a network, only when said database of said reader is being updated by
said network.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein an entire process of said method is performable off-line.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein said smart card carries thereon predetermined N channels as C1, C2,..., CN, where N is an integer,

wherein each channel Ci, with i equal to 1, 2, ..., N, carries a pair of numbers (hi, li), and wherein hi is the ith *high number* and li is the ith *low number*.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising:

using public key cryptography with associated encoding and decoding functions Vi and Vi⁻¹ in each channel i,

wherein each function Vi⁻¹ is known publicly, and Vi is known only to a predetermined party representing an owner of the smart card.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein for each i in 1, 2, ..., N, the pair (hi, li) is such that hi = Vi(li), or hi = Vi(K(li)), where K represents a publicly-known cryptographic hash function, and

wherein each li contains a plurality of symbols for redundancy.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

processing, using an invertible function f which is made public, such that the low numbers in said smart card satisfy $l(i+j) = f^j(l_i)$, where f^j represents the jth iteration of the function f.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein said reader includes a random number generator, which,

when a card is read, chooses a pair (a, b) of distinct numbers with $a < b$ between 1 and N,
wherein before processing the smart card, the reader obtains the pair (ha, la) and hb;
using the public keys Va^{-1} and Vb^{-1} , checking by the reader whether the pairs (ha, la)
and (hb, lb) are compatible, and, consequently, that the numbers ha, la, and hb belong to a same
5 legitimate card.

9. The method of claim 4, wherein a reader obtains a content of only two of said channels.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

periodically communicating, by a reader of said smart card, with a data base where a
predetermined characteristic of the card is checked.

10 11. The method of claim 10, wherein the predetermined characteristic comprises whether a
smart card has delivered more than a predetermined amount of money to a user of the smart card.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein if a card is detected as delivering too much money, the
data base communicates a corresponding number 11 to all readers in a network, so that smart
cards carrying said corresponding number are declined.

15 13. The method of claim 1, wherein said cryptographic structure is changed periodically.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein said smart card is invalidated after a predetermined time of usage.

15. The method of claim 8, wherein said pairs (h_i , l_i) to be contained on the smart card are generated by:

5 choosing a prefix of l_1 once for all transactions, or changed whenever needed, wherein said prefix is publicly known; and

 providing a sequence, such that the sequence is generated so that a same number is not chosen twice, and so that corresponding other l_i 's are not chosen as new l_1 s.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

10 concatenating the prefix and the sequence to form l_1 ; and

 choosing a function f which is invertible and is publicly known, to construct $l_2 = f(l_1)$, $l_3 = f(l_2)$, and so forth.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the function f is chosen to be the identity map, in which case $l_1 = l_2 = l_3 = \dots = l_N$.

15 18. The method of claim 17, choosing, for a number N , N public key-private key pairs, such that a first private key V_1 is for computing $h_1 = V_1(l_1)$, a second private key V_2 is for computing $h_2 = V_2(l_2)$, and so on.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising:

verifying whether the smart card is authentic; and

checking whether the smart card is not in a list of cards to be refused.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein, when the smart card is read by a reader, a random generator
5 is prompted which provides two integer numbers, a and b, which are not between 1 and N, with a
< b.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein said numbers a, b are transmitted to the smart card which
delivers two high numbers ha, hb, and a low number la in a channel a, and

wherein the pair (a, b), together with a function f in a memory in the reader, are used to
10 compute the low number lb = $f^{(b-a)}(la)$, said memory in said reader delivering public keys Va^{-1}
and Vb^{-1} .

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the public keys are used by a comparator together with the
pairs (ha, la) and (hb, lb), to verify that the pairs are compatible with the corresponding keys, and
that the pairs are from a same legitimate card.

23. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

performing a final validation of the smart card by at least one of:

contacting a central data base if an entire transaction is made on-line with no

penalty; and

checking with a local data base in a reader, said local database being refreshed periodically by contact between said local database and said central database.

24. A method of preventing counterfeiting of a smart card, comprising:

5 providing a smart card such that none of confidential information and a cryptographic key for authorizing the smart card, is carried on the smart card;

reading said card by a reader such that in each reading, said reader reads only a predetermined small amount of information which makes the card unique.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein a transaction performed under said method comprises substantially an off-line transaction.

26. A system for preventing cloning of a smart card, comprising:

a smart card such that a cryptographic structure for authorizing the smart card is not carried on the smart card; and

a reader for reading the smart card and including a database for linking to a network and
15 being updated periodically with a list of unauthorized smart cards,

wherein said cryptographic structure is kept secret by whoever emits the card or an agent thereof.

27. A signal-bearing medium tangibly embodying a program of machine-readable instructions executable by a digital processing apparatus to perform a method for preventing counterfeiting and cloning of smart cards, comprising:

providing a smart card with a cryptographic structure for authorizing the smart card

5 which cannot be accessed completely by a predetermined number of readings,

wherein said cryptographic structure can be built only by whoever emits the card or an agent thereof.